

WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

survey results 2008/09

East Canadian High Arctic Light-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla hrota*

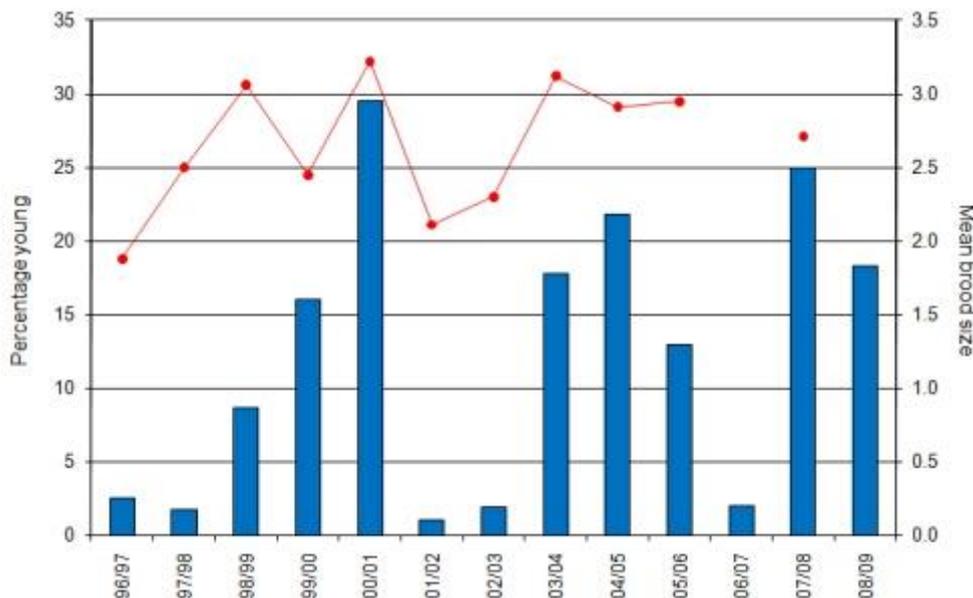
1. Abundance

For the seventh consecutive year, comprehensive coverage of sites in Iceland, Ireland, and the UK that support this population was undertaken in October. The census date was 11/12 October. Irish and UK sites were covered from the ground and Icelandic sites by aerial survey.

The survey in Iceland recorded 6,066 geese at Breidafjordur and Faxafloi. A total of 25,605 birds were counted at Strangford Loch, the main autumn site, and other significant concentrations were seen at Lough Foyle (2,583) and the area from Dublin to Louth (1,254). A few additional smaller counts were also received from Jersey and northern France. Overall, the total count was 37,650.

2. Breeding success

From a total of 12,667 geese aged, 18.3% were young. No brood size data are available at present.



The mean percentage of young (blue columns) and mean brood size (red dots) of East Canadian High Arctic Light-bellied Brent Geese, 1996/97 to 2008/09. Note: no brood size data are available for 2006/07 and 2008/09.

3. Discussion

Results from the 2008 International Census of East Canadian High Arctic Light-bellied Brent Geese indicate numbers were 6% lower than the previous year, and breeding success was above the most recent ten-year average (13.6% + 3.21 SE).

Although synchronised counts are undertaken across the flyway, it is not possible to account for those birds that may have been mid-Atlantic (between Iceland and the UK and Ireland) at the time of the census, nor the much smaller numbers that may still have been heading eastwards from Greenland. Given the reasonably high breeding success in 2008, numbers were expected to have been in excess of 40,000. It is, therefore, suspected that several thousand birds were 'at sea' on migration at the time of the count.

Numbers of East Canadian High Arctic Light-bellied Brent Geese have been gradually increasing since the first complete census in Ireland in 1960/61. Though there was a decline in the early 1990s, numbers rose again fairly rapidly and have now reached an all time high. Whilst the increase in total numbers can partly be attributed to an

improvement in coverage and survey methodology since 2002/03, when the census also included counts from Iceland, it is clear that there has also been genuine and rapid growth in the population in recent years.

This report should be cited as:

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Goose & Swan Monitoring